

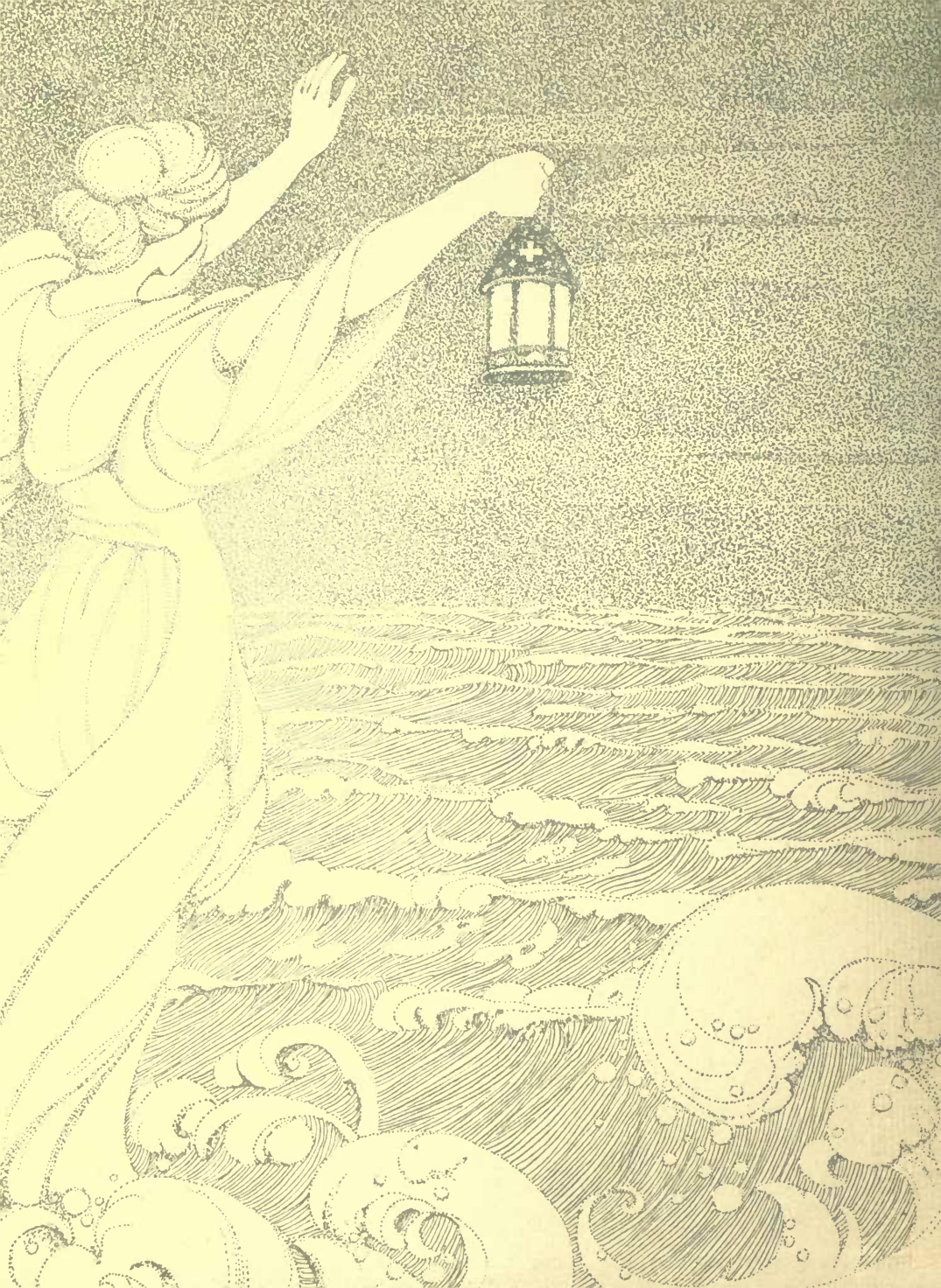
A
0001106210



0-201-11106-2

THE LADY OF THE LIGHT HOUSE

HELEN S. WOODRUFF





William Gordon

Nov 27

THE FAIR OF THE FUTURE
HALL OF RECORDS

THE LADY OF THE LIGHTHOUSE

HELEN S. WOODRUFF

By HELEN S. WOODRUFF

MIS' BEAUTY

ILLUSTRATED.

12MO.

NET \$1.00

THE LADY OF THE LIGHTHOUSE

ILLUSTRATED. SMALL QUARTO. NET \$1.00

REALLY TRULY NATURE STORIES

ILLUSTRATED. SMALL QUARTO. NET \$1.00

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY
NEW YORK

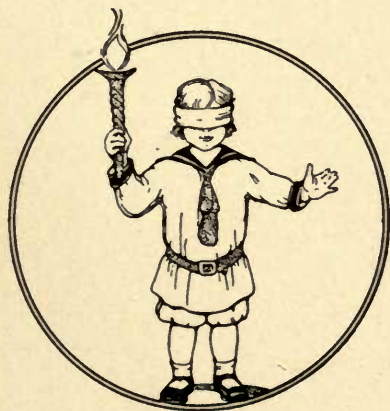


THE LADY

THE LADY OF THE LIGHTHOUSE

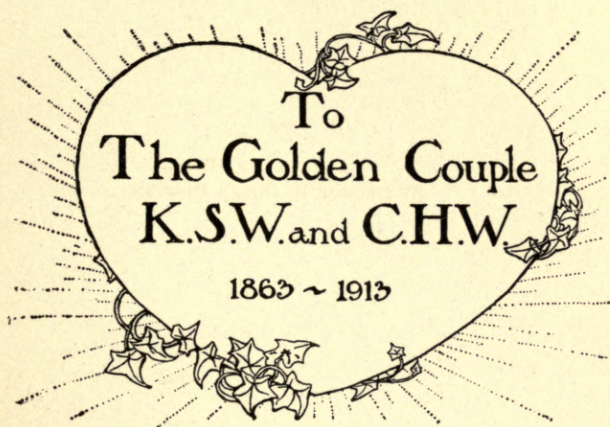
BY
HELEN S. WOODRUFF

With Decorations by
Griselda M. McClure



NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

COPYRIGHT, 1913,
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY



2133900

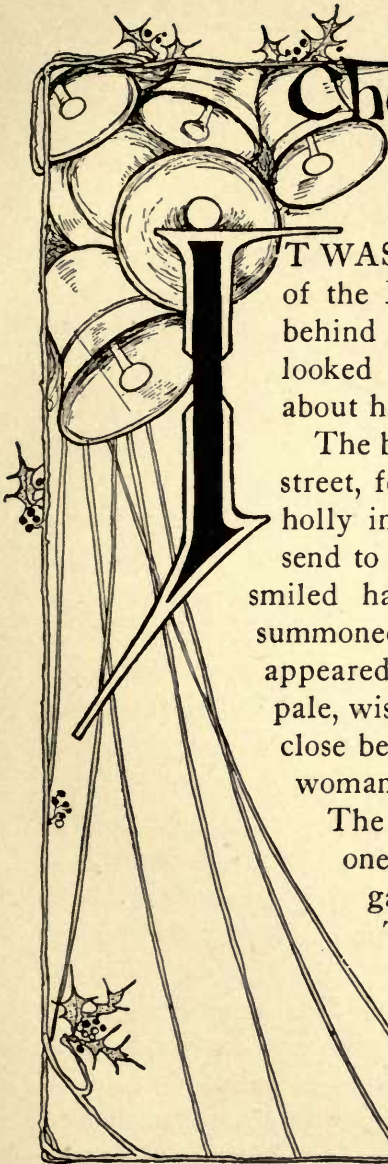
AUTHOR'S NOTE

*T*HERE is a real "Lady of the Lighthouse" and this book is inspired by her. But the book is not a portrait of her, nor is its story her story. On the other hand, the accounts of the methods for cheering and helping the blind are all based on fact. An able worker at the real "Lighthouse" has read the book and has approved its fidelity in that regard.

And now the real "Lady of the Lighthouse" reads it for the first time.

August 22, 1913.

THE LADY OF THE LIGHTHOUSE




Chapter One

IT WAS Christmas Day. The Lady of the Lighthouse closed the door behind her, ran down the steps and looked at the snow-caressed world about her.

The brownstone houses across the street, festive with their wreaths of holly in every window, seemed to send to her their greetings, and she smiled happily. Then, as though summoned by that very smile, there appeared in the window opposite the pale, wistful face of a little boy, and close beside it that of an old negro woman.

The lady paused and, raising one long slim hand, waved gaily to the pair.

The negro's kindly wrinkled face broke into an answering smile, and stooping she said something to the child. He pressed closer to



12 THE LADY OF THE LIGHTHOUSE

the window, and raising his hand waved it to her; and though she could see a wan smile flicker across his face, she also saw that his big round eyes held no responsive gleam.

"He's blind!" she exclaimed. "The poor little darling!" tears quickly filling her own eyes; and she stood gazing across at the little stricken face.

She had never seen either of the two before, and did not know to whom they belonged, this sweet faced old negress, so plainly an old-fashioned Mammy, nor the small blind boy beside her. Should she cross over, she wondered, ring, and ask to go up and see the child? She felt she would like to do so, but realized it was a thing that his parents might well resent; a thing that few, if any, would do in New York. And yet, on this day set apart by all her world for celebration of the glad tidings it commemorates, should she fail to find and comfort this little darkened life with *her* message of glad tidings?

She decided that she would go, and again waving her hand at the pair, swiftly crossed the street, ran up the steps below them, and rang the bell.

The door opened and a man in livery stood stiffly aside.

"Good morning! Merry Christmas!" she said. "Who lives here, please?" and without waiting for his answer she stepped inside the door.

The man's face showed signs of almost human intelligence, even emotion, for a moment at the unex-

pectedness of her greeting, but he as quickly controlled himself and gazed at the lady stoically. America was a queer place, and he, so lately from dear old England, must not be taken off his guard. So he stood respectfully by and let her repeat the question.

"Who lives here—James?—for you are named James, aren't you?" she continued with a twinkle, looking him up and down.

"Yes, my Lady. James 'Enery," he replied, seeing nothing funny in the situation. She was beautifully dressed, and he was English enough to know intuitively that she was "of class;" so following the rule he had adopted early in life, to use a title when in doubt, he answered her further:

"Mr. Vaughn lives here, my Lady."

"I'd like to speak to *Mrs.* Vaughn, James Henry," she announced, throwing back her furs and sweeping into the drawing-room.

His jaw dropped. "Begging your Ladyship's pardon, but there ain't no Missis. Only the Master's stopping in and 'e's hout," he announced solemnly.

The Lady of the Lighthouse laughed.

"Well, then, James, I'll speak to *him*," and she settled herself in a chair.

The butler did not move. "But 'e's really hout, my Lady!"

"Oh," she again laughed, "I guess I didn't quite understand. Well, I tell you, James," she continued, standing up and drawing a bill from her pocketbook

and walking over to him, "there's something you can do for me. Here's a Christmas present for you. I want to speak to Mammy—upstairs," pointing. "Little Master's nurse. Understand?"

"Yes, my Lady," he replied, folding the bill in his palm. "'Ere, my Lady?"

"Yes, here," she said. "But hurry, for I haven't long to stay!"

He cast a gentle look of reproof at her as she turned away and reseated herself. Why was it, he wondered, that everyone in America told him to hurry? Then, sighing inaudibly, he left the room.

The Lady of the Lighthouse sat musing. Was her conduct in thus gaining admission to the child reprehensible? She knew it would be considered so by some, and she herself did not like entering this stranger's house as she was doing; but yet, as the boy's wistful face rose before her mind's eye, she could not help feeling that she was acting for the right. A little blind child had sent a signal of distress from out his gloom, and she, the Lighthouse Keeper, had seen it and could help him. She arose, determined to carry out her plan whatever happened, and stood as the old negro woman entered the room and curtsied.

"Good morning! Merry Christmas!" she said, smiling at the quaint darky.

"Law, thankee, honey," Mammy beamed, taking in at a glance the tall, richly gowned figure and its exquisitely modeled face. "De same to you an' as

many mo' as a flower like you deserves! Did yer sen' fer me?"

"Yes, Mammy," she replied, stepping closer and looking at her earnestly. "I want to see your little Master. He's blind, isn't he?"

The woman's eyes filled with tears, and wiping them away with her snowy apron she seemed about to lead her to him, when, suddenly checking herself, she shook her head sadly.

"I jes' can't, Missy," she said plaintively. "Forgive me, but his pa an' me is de onlyest *ma* he's got, an' we'se done made up our min's to protec' him from de gaze of de worl', an' not let folks know how 'flicted he are."

The lady was touched by the old nurse's loyalty, but experience had taught her just how wrong such protection was, and so she argued gently:

"But I'm here to help you! Come, take me to him. This is our Saviour's birthday," moving nearer the door, "and I'm sure He has sent me to show your little blind boy 'the Light in the East.' Come, show me where he is."

Her head was thrown back, a smile parted her lips, and as the negress looked at her all the misgivings she had felt about the matter vanished, and motioning her to follow, she led the way up the broad white stairs to a door at the top.

"Here he are, Missy," she whispered, opening the door and standing aside with a curtsy.

The Lady of the Lighthouse stepped inside the

room, and her eyes fell upon an empty Christmas stocking at her feet, its contents lying deserted upon the floor, and then looking further she saw the little boy himself huddled, desolate and forlorn, in a big chair nearby. His face was buried in its cushions, but at the sound of her approach he lifted big blue eyes toward her—eyes that were made for love and laughter, but were now so strangely stilled and saddened—and began to cry. It was a low, puzzled wail of anguish, hopeless and pitiful in its unlikeness to the cry of an ordinary child, and the lady's heart ached in sympathy as she stood, unable to go closer to him for a moment.

"Sunshiny-boy, darlin'," Mammy said, herself going across and putting her arms about him, "a lady's comed to see you, so doan cry. Be a nice little gemman fer Mammy. Dar, dar honey!" But at her words he clung to her, convulsively sobbing as though his heart would break.

"The poor little fellow!" the lady murmured, and crossing over too, she joined Mammy where she knelt by his side.

"Dear," she addressed him, and at the sound of her gentle, vibrant voice he ceased crying to listen, turning his face to hers, "I've come to help you. Don't be afraid, I'm Miss Hope; and my other little boys like you call me 'The Lady of the Lighthouse.' Wouldn't you like for me to show you how I play with them? I know lots of nice games!"

The child's wide eyes stared unseeingly into hers;

then he wailed in sudden terror. "No, no. Go 'way! I can't see you. It's all night! Mammy, Mammy!" and he threw himself from where he sat into the arms quickly held out to catch him, and lay sobbing upon the woman's breast.

"Oh, Missy," she choked, "he's always dis way when anything new happens. I oughten ter let yer come! Dar, Mammy's boy! I ain't gwiner let nothin' git yer!" Then to the lady again: "We dassent let him even walk about, less de furncher's all fixed," pointing towards it shrouded with cotton at its sharp edges. "An' he doan understand, my po' baby!" sobbing herself by now, and rocking back and forth.

"How long has he been so?" Miss Hope asked in a low voice.

"Nearly two months," the woman replied, patting and soothing the little shaking form. "Scarlet fever, an' hit lef' him dis a' way."

"It's all night," the boy moaned, breaking out in another paroxysm, "and I can't see! Make her go 'way!"

"Shu-u-u, Shiny, shu-u-u; doan talk dat a' way," she begged. "He thinks you'se a strange doctor, or somethin'," she whisperingly explained. "Dey's nearly pestered de life outen him, po' chile! But dar darlin', doan cry no mo'! Please don't!"

Miss Hope started to rise to her feet, then changing her mind stayed where she was, while the child continued his frightened sobbing. She understood perfectly how he felt; how when he had been suddenly

shut off in darkness things once familiar to him had become menacing terrors; for she, too, years before, had gone through the same thing. And so she knew just what the little fellow before her was suffering now.

"Sunshiny-boy," she said, persuasively, using the pretty whimsical title that the woman had used, "don't cry. I want to teach you how you *can* see. Wouldn't you like to know?" and she reached for one of his hands. "I'm the Lady of the Lighthouse; all my little boys call me that, as I told you just now, because they are blind, too, and I teach them how to see with their fingers."

The child hushed a moment and looked towards her.

"What's his name, Mammy?" she asked in a lower tone.

"Victor Vaughn Junior," the negress answered; then volunteered further, "Victor Vaughn's fer his pa, but I never is made out who de Junior's fer!"

"Victor," Miss Hope said, gently drawing his hand within her own and putting it on her lips, "what do you feel?"

He sobbed again convulsively, trying to snatch his hand away, but she held to it and forced it up to his own lips. "And now what do you feel?"

He almost hushed, interested in spite of himself by this time, and she said, "It's your mouth, dear; and this," again putting his fingers over her lips, "is my mouth; and *this*," drawing him closer and kiss-

ing him, "is our two mouths." Then moving his hand back and forth again and again she continued, "And this is my nose, and this is your nose; and these are my eyes, and those are your eyes," and so on, until she had made him feel the contour of each of their features, talking to him quietly, with reassuring pats the while.

His sobs grew less and less frightened until they ceased entirely, and as she arose and took him upon her lap his face brightened with a hopeful interest, and cuddling up to her he whispered, "Show me more, Light-lady, show me more!"

One by one she took up his toys, so lately of no interest to him, and, making him feel them, explained each curve and angle of their outline. It was wonderful to see his little face grow happier as he began to understand dimly the import of her lesson, and the old woman watching sat spell-bound, her heart telling her that the little darkened life that she treasured so much was at last beginning to find a Light.

"And so, Victor boy," the Lady of the Lighthouse concluded, "you really have *ten* eyes here," counting his chubby fingers, "instead of only two with which to see everything beautiful."

"Lawdy!" Mammy broke in, as they heard a step upon the stairs, "Dar's Mr. Vicky!" and before any of them could move a tall man with a deeply serious face appeared in the doorway.

He stared at the picture that met his gaze; the beautiful stranger seated in front of him, and on her

lap his little son apparently happier than he had been for many weeks.

Miss Hope stood Victor down and rose, keeping hold of his hand however. Her head was thrown back in a characteristic gesture, but she smiled as she said simply, "I'm Miss Hope, Mr. Vaughn. Your neighbor," waving towards the opposite side of the street. "I trust you don't think me presumptuous, but I could not help coming! I saw your son from his window—and knew he needed me."

The man was still too surprised to answer, save by an involuntary step forward, and she continued:

"I was once as he is now,"—her voice was very low and sweet,—“and since then I've been trying to help all God's 'night children' find the Light; and oh, it's a wonderful work!" her enthusiasm breaking through her reserve. "And I'm so thankful to have found Victor! And he's glad, too; aren't you, dear?"

The child clutched her hand more closely for answer, his big eyes staring about the room, vainly endeavoring to see his father.

Mr. Vaughn looked at him and tears filled his eyes. This little son stood for all that was worth while in his life; love, ambition, inspiration, everything; and to have him thus afflicted, made different from the normal healthy boy he had always been, almost killed him. But now he frowned and drew back. "I do not want to seem inhospitable, Miss Hope," he said, and she bit her lip at his tone, "in fact, I

appreciate your kindness, but it's my desire that no one see my boy as he is now."

He felt embittered with the world. His marriage had not been a happy one, but finally happiness had come at the birth of his son. This, however, was quickly followed by his wife's death and the questions of doubt and half-remorse which that had raised in his mind; and now, little Victor's blindness! The doctors had told him that very day that the boy would probably never regain his sight.

Miss Hope colored deeply, let go of Victor's hand, took a step forward as though about to quit the room, then holding her head at a haughtier angle, but with a softened look in her eyes, stopped and said quietly: "You are a very foolish man and I shall not allow you to be so unjust!"

Mr. Vaughn looked his astonishment and she went on: "I appreciate your feeling in a way; but I don't believe you can justify it yourself. Because you do not want other people to see or know of your sorrow, will you deliberately cut your son off from the world? It's not fair," she argued; "he's entitled to it and its pleasures as much as you are! And I'm sure you're not going to deny me the pleasure of helping him have ten eyes instead of two; for this morning he's begun using his finger-eyes, haven't you, dear?"

"Yes, Daddy-boy," Victor broke in, holding up both hands, fingers outspread, "*ten eyes!* And oh, I want to learn, I want to!"

"Then you shall, Little-man," his father answered, striding forward and catching him up upon his shoulder. And turning he continued, "Thank you, Miss Hope," his voice breaking as he spoke; "I've been selfish, though I didn't realize it before now. I couldn't bear to acknowledge the truth——"

"Yes, I know," she said sympathetically.

"But now——"

"Now," she caught him up, "I must go on down to my Lighthouse, for my lights, big and small, are awaiting me there. May Victor go with me? We are having our men's Christmas-tree this morning."

Mr. Vaughn held his son more closely, and in spite of what he had just said, hesitated.

"I don't think he would wish to go. He feels as I do."

"Shall we let him decide?" she asked quickly. Then to the boy, "Victor, dear, do you want to go to the Lighthouse and see the other little boys who have ten finger-eyes like you are going to have?"

"Yes!" he exclaimed eagerly. "And Daddy-boy-chum, you must come too. Won't you?"

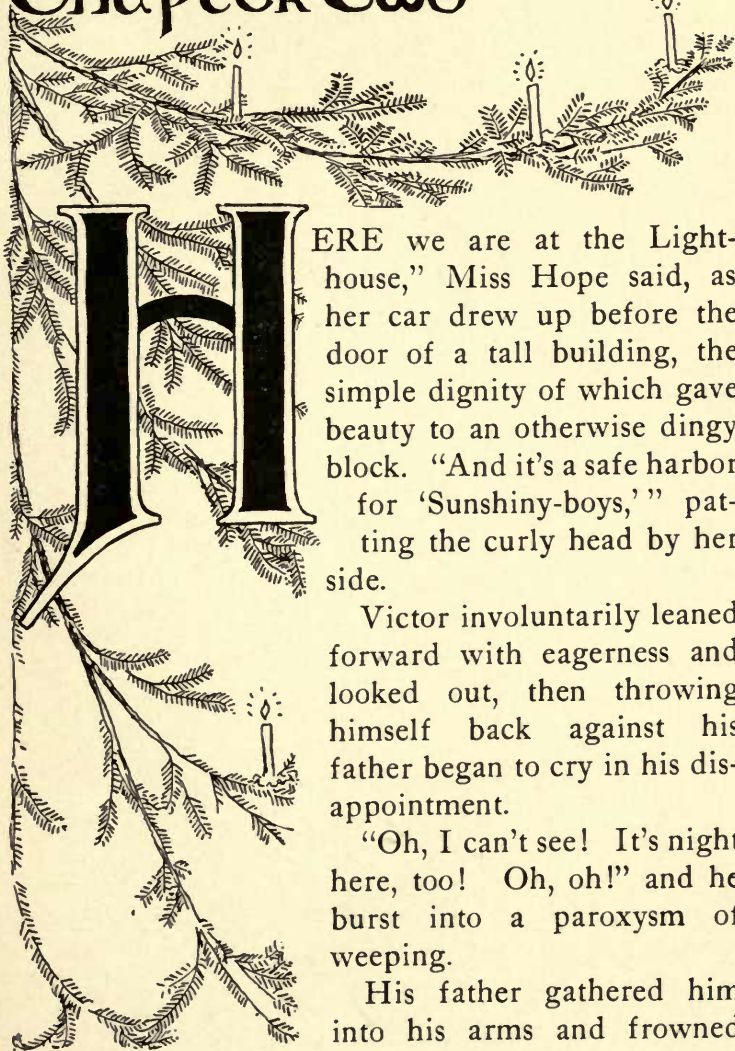
"I certainly will, Little-man," he readily agreed, made happy by this, his son's first show of enthusiasm since his illness.

"Then march me downstairs like you used to," Victor demanded, holding tightly and straddling his father's neck. "Come on, Light-lady; we'se soldiers!" And as they disappeared Mammy heard his gay little voice saying, "It takes a pretty brave

soldier to march through the *night*, doesn't it, Daddy?"

"De Lawd be praised!" she exclaimed fervently, watching them while the tears ran down her cheeks. "Dat lady is Gawd's own Light, herse'f; a reg'lar fust cousin to de angels! An' I does believe *He* sent her, sho' 'nough, jes like she say He had, to give us back our real Sunshiny-boy," and she went to the window to see them depart.

Chapter Two



HERE we are at the Lighthouse," Miss Hope said, as her car drew up before the door of a tall building, the simple dignity of which gave beauty to an otherwise dingy block. "And it's a safe harbor for 'Sunshiny-boys,' " patting the curly head by her side.

Victor involuntarily leaned forward with eagerness and looked out, then throwing himself back against his father began to cry in his disappointment.

"Oh, I can't see! It's night here, too! Oh, oh!" and he burst into a paroxysm of weeping.

His father gathered him into his arms and frowned

deeply. "Then we'll go home, Little-man; don't cry!" and turning to their companion continued: "It's as I feared. He's too nervous. I must take him back—"

"You must do nothing of the kind!" Miss Hope broke in indignantly. "That's the trouble now," and laying her hand on the boy's struggling shoulder she said almost sternly, "Victor, hush crying, dear."

He ceased a moment for breath and she went on, "I'm going to teach you to see it and all else, in time, but you must not cry," and she stepped from the car, taking him firmly in her arms, and set him down as his father followed.

The boy was surprised, and stood, his face staring up at her, without answering. For over two months he had been allowed to do exactly as he pleased, and at this unusual word of command, given kindly, but with so much firmness, he felt awed and silenced. He was, as Miss Hope said, a pitiful little derelict drifting upon an ocean of fear, buffeted about by doubt, because there had been no understanding hand to guide him. Small wonder, then, that he shrank from every new experience and cried so constantly. And as she, the Lighthouse Keeper, again looked down at the pathetic little figure, her heart beat with gladness at the thought that by putting her hand to the helm and freighting this precious craft with knowledge, she could steer it away from the threatening rocks of idle discontent, and on into the open sea of usefulness.

"Come now, dear, we'll go in," she said, taking his hand and smiling an invitation to the other, and she led them up the broad stone steps and into the vestibule.

As Mr. Vaughn sprang forward to open the heavy door, a perfect bedlam of happy noises reached them and he looked at her in inquiry.

"The Christmas frolic has begun," she announced with a laugh, drawing Victor into the hall. "You'd better carry him, Mr. Vaughn. I'll lead the way," and she hurried on in front of them.

They entered a big room filled with sunshine and many sweet flowering plants, and Mr. Vaughn looked with surprise at the pretty scene before him. Gaily colored song-birds, hanging about in their cages, were flooding the air with their Christmas carols, and the laughing voices of men and boys seemed to vie with them in joyousness. But at the approach of the newcomers a sudden silence fell upon them all, and they turned glowing faces towards the door.

Miss Hope stepped forward quickly, and in the deep, sweet tones that had been the signal of "Lights ahead" for so many of them she called:

"Lights of the Lighthouse, Merry Christmas!"

"It's the Lady of the Lighthouse!" a boy's shrill voice cried, almost before she had ceased speaking, and the whole assemblage broke into a chorus of "Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!" and crowd-

ing forward they each greeted joyfully the one whom they all loved so dearly.

Mr. Vaughn looking on with continued surprise at the happy throng noticed that the young boy who had sounded the first note of greeting did not now join in with the others. He saw that he was talking to a number of boys about his own age, dressed like him in the uniforms of Boy Scouts, and that they were all laughing together. Then in a moment more he saw them march to the middle of the room, and with faces mischievous and merry, promptly stand on their heads in a row, wave their heels in the air and shout in chorus, "Merry Christmas!"

"Well, that *is* a new way to present arms," he laughed, speaking to Miss Hope, who, laughing herself at the funny sight, had quickly explained it to the others, making them all laugh merrily.

"Yes," she answered, "that's in my especial honor, too, I suppose. My blind Scouts have many and varied ways of showing their enthusiasm. But isn't it wonderful, Mr. Vaughn, to see so much joy of life among them?" she continued seriously. "And just to think they were most of them, young and old alike, as unhappy as Victor is now, before the rays of the Lighthouse reached them."

Mr. Vaughn looked down at the anxious, puzzled face of his son, so lonely in its utter darkness, then back at the whooping, happy crowd of other boys, and quick tears sprang to his eyes.

"Yes, it is," he answered hoarsely, "and I give my

boy into your keeping, Lady of the Lighthouse." And placing the child's hand in hers he wheeled and left the room. The sight of this lovely woman giving all that was sweetest and best in her generous nature to those less fortunate than she, their absolute devotion to her, and lastly the wonderful content and happiness that she had been able to give them in return, touched his heart as nothing in the world had ever done before, and he felt he would be unable to control his tears unless he could be alone.

"And now, Victor, dear," Miss Hope was saying, "hold up your head, *so*," and she raised his drooping chin with her hand. "We are God's *up-standing* creatures and must face all things, head up, bravely. Then as he obeyed her, and his sightless eyes looked steadily in front of him, she continued, "My Scouts and I will show you the Christmas-tree."

She led him to it and taking one of the branches in her hands, bent it down and put his little fingers about it.

"See," she said, "it's all stiff and prickly, short needles; can you tell me what kind of tree it is?"

Victor's face continued to look blankly up at her, his fingers clutching eagerly at the branch.

"I can," the Chief Scout Director of Chivalry volunteered in the same shrill voice that had announced their arrival a little while before. "It's a spruce. And much prettier than the one we had last year, isn't it?" facing about and addressing the crowd that had eagerly gathered around them.

"Yes, yes," they agreed in chorus, as their sensitive fingers flew nimbly over its limbs and they sniffed its pungent odor with pleasure.

"But don't you think it's time we saw what Santa Claus brought us?" the Lady of the Lighthouse asked gaily, stepping around to the other side of the tree where stood a table piled high with bundles.

A laughing shout of assent greeted this suggestion, and hundreds of fingers at once began feeling of them, each person choosing for his that bundle which appealed to his imagination. There were big and little ones, long and short ones, smooth and humpy ones, ones of every size and shape, and the opening of these, each in turn, invariably caused much joking and laughter; for always the finger-eyes had been tricked, and the contents were very different from what was indicated by the exterior.

It was great fun, and when it was all over and everyone had received in some mysterious way the very things that he wanted or needed most, the Lady of the Lighthouse raised her lovely voice in a hymn of thanksgiving, and the Lights of the Lighthouse one and all joined in until they made the roof-beams ring!

"And now," she said, when they had finished and were about to go to their respective homes, "remember this; that what the Lighthouse has done for you, you can do for others. Remember that you are my Crew and my Torch-bearers as well, and must help all those that are wrecked or drifting, and teach

them, as you have been taught, to find 'Light through Work.' That is our motto, you know, and we must live up to it."

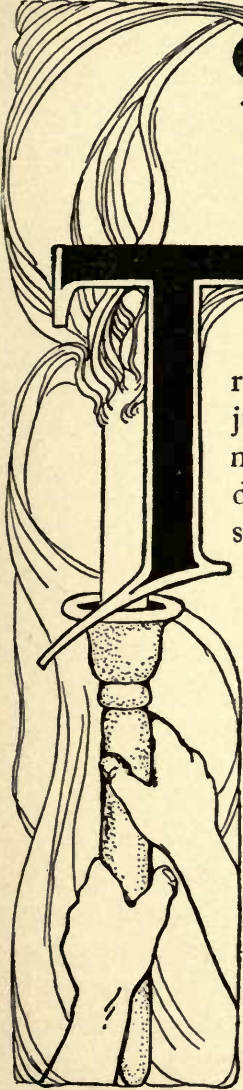
During all this time Victor had received the undivided attention of the kindly little Director of Chivalry, who leading him about had shown him everything, explaining and encouraging the while; and now as the crowd scattered, and Miss Hope once more took possession of his hand, he smiled at her, head held proudly and his face transformed by what he felt intuitively to be the promise of happiness to come.

"Oh, Light-lady," he exclaimed, "this is the very bestest Christmas I've had to-day! Where's my Daddy-boy-chum? I want to tell him—and Mammy—all about it!"

"Here I am, Little-man," Mr. Vaughn said, having stolen in again during the singing. And gathering his son up upon his shoulder he held his hand out to the Lady of the Lighthouse.

"God bless you!" he said fervently.

Chapter Three



THE Lady of the Lighthouse hurried across the street and ran up the steps of the Vaughn house, just as she had done on that first day many months before. But to-day she did not hesitate, and as James Henry, still respectfully impassive, answered her imperative ring, she passed him with a nod of greeting and mounted the stairs unannounced.

A child's laughing voice, the shrill barking of a small dog, accompanied by a man's deeper tones and also an occasional feminine squeal, reached her as she neared the door, and pausing an instant before entering she stood enjoying the happy sight. Victor, his curls flying, his face alight with fun, and a fluffy dog running at his heels, was dancing about merrily

after Mr. Vaughn and Mammy, both of whom were blindfolded and jumping awkwardly around the room in an animated game of Blind-man's Buff.

The child's quick ear caught the rustle of Miss Hope's skirts, however, and at once abandoning the others he ran straight to her and threw his arms around her knees.

"Oh, Light-lady," he cried affectionately, "it's been so long waiting for you! You're ten minutes late!" proudly fingering his watch with its raised numerals. "Hurry now and get blind-folded so you can play with us!"

Miss Hope laughed and put her hand upon his curls. "No, Shiny-boy," she said, "I haven't time to play this afternoon—unless of course you want to go without your lesson."

"Oh, no, no, I couldn't do that!" and taking her hand he tugged her to a chair and quickly scrambled up beside her. Mr. Vaughn and the negress had unbandaged their eyes, and after smiling their greetings stood watching as the boy turned his flower-like face up to her sunny one in an eager appeal for her teaching.

Mammy's prophecy had come true. Victor having joined the Lighthouse Crew on that glad Christmas Day, was now the cheerful, happy Sunshiny-boy of before his illness. With a mind unusually bright and fingers full of eagerness he had quickly grasped the meaning of that first lesson, and since then had been steadily advancing at every opportunity, until

now, at Miss Hope's urgent advice, he was attending the public school kindergarten with sighted children.

The Lady of the Lighthouse, herself a sculptor, had early discovered in him the same divine spark, which discovery had given her great joy; and so every afternoon she came, as now, to teach him something new, for he was an ever-increasing source of delight to her. And each time that she came he snuggled more closely into her arms, which seemed to him made for the purpose, and poured out on her the son-love that had been given him to bestow upon his mother.

"Light-lady," he said whimsically as he worked the bit of clay held in his hands, and at the same time continually leaned forward to feel his dog's head, "the world's all full of you. Did you know it?"

She laughed. "Why, what do you mean, Shiny-boy?" looking down at him. He seemed such a baby, and yet at times he was so strangely quaint and serious. "How is the world all full of me?"

"Oh, it just is," he stated, rather puzzled himself to know how he was going to explain such a remark, yet vaguely trying to put into words the thought that she had made for him the lovely world of sound and touch in which he now lived. "I don't 'zactly know how to say it," he continued; "but everything nice *feels* like you. Don't you understand?"

"Why you little love-maker!" she exclaimed, suddenly gathering him to her in a laughing hug.

"Don't squash my feel-picture!" he warned, holding the bit of clay at arm's length, then as she released him running his hands over it quickly.

"Oh, I have mashed it!" she said with sorrow.

"Yes," he admitted, feeling it again. "A little." Then laughing, "It's not like Twinkle-doggy now, it's like Mammy!" and he grinned mischievously toward where he knew the woman was standing. "See, Mammy, see," he teased, "the nose is all flat like yours."

"Law, Shiny, ain't you 'shamed yo'se'f!" she chuckled, looking at the crudely modeled dog's head.

Mr. Vaughn joined his laughter to hers, and she added, addressing Miss Hope, "Hit's wonderful, Miss Fust-cousin-to-de-angels, how you'se learned dat boy to see! Why, he see right now better dan if he *could* see, I declar' he do!"

"It is wonderful," Mr. Vaughn agreed with seriousness, looking earnestly at the little fellow and patting him upon the head. "I don't know what we should have done if the Lady of the Lighthouse hadn't discovered we were in trouble and put out to help us; I really don't!" and his eyes were full of gratitude and emotion as he spoke. "Eh, Little-man?"

"Humph, 'troubles breeds troubles,'" Mammy philosophized to herself, looking from one to the other of the pair and smiling in kindly shrewdness; "an' dar's mo' dan one kind of blindness in dis per-

ishin' worl', I'se noticed," and she began bustling about the room happily.

From the minute she had seen Miss Hope she had loved her, and in her bosom there had been planted the flower of romance. And now, nourished as it was by every look and gesture of the unconscious couple before her, it seemed to her loyal old heart about to burst into bloom.

"Yes, Shiny-boy's a wonderful pupil," Miss Hope agreed, "and I predict a great future for him. Though remember," she went on, "I don't believe the doctors as you do. I believe from my own personal experience that his sight can be restored. That is, if we can get *my* doctor to come over and take charge of the case." Then speaking to the child, "Our time's up, cheri! I must go. Are you going to be my little Torch-bearer this afternoon?" and she began pulling on her gloves.

"Oh, yes, yes," he cried. "Can't I, Daddy-boy?"

"I don't quite understand, Little-man," Mr. Vaughn answered. "What is it you want him to do, Miss Hope?"

"I promised to take him 'torch-lighting' with me," she explained. "That is, go down in the rough part of our city where the rocks of disaster loom large, and where there are numberless human ships wrecked and drifting, to look for those that the rays of the Lighthouse cannot reach. There are many such, too poor and wretched to be found save by searching diligently. Whenever I have a few hours

from my executive duties, which is seldom, I join the ranks of my Crew and like them try to take down a gleam of cheer."

Mr. Vaughn looked doubtful. "But I don't think you should go to that part of town alone."

"She won't, Daddy-boy," little Victor interrupted. "I'll be there to guard her. I'm her special Scout now, you know. She made the big boys take me in and——"

"It's not safe," Mr. Vaughn continued, not heeding his son's remarks in his anxiety.

Miss Hope's proud head went up, and she made as if to answer, but Mr. Vaughn went on hurriedly. "Pardon me, but you are much too young and beautiful——"

"Nonsense!" she broke in, resenting as always any attempted check upon her independence.

"Then I shall go with you," flushing and squaring his chin at her tone.

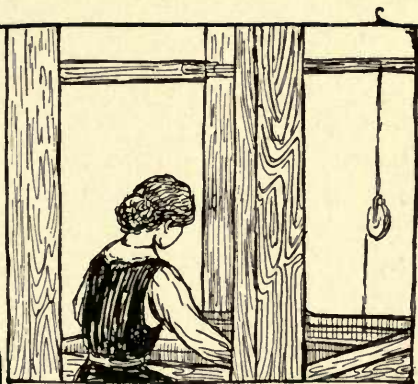
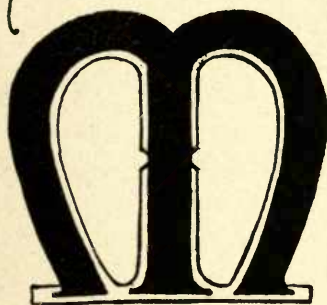
"Why, certainly, Victor and I shall be delighted to have you," she said, seeing his annoyance and at once regretting that she had scoffed at his concern. "Come, dear," to the child; and smiling an adieu to the old negress she left the room followed by the other two.

"Well, *Mr. Biggs*," Mammy remarked to the butler, just then appearing from another direction, "you looks like a lonesome night in a grave-yard, *as usual*; but yer can't th'ow no wet mattress on *my gladness*!" and she grinned, pointing her finger at the vanishing

trio. "Fer Mr. Vicky, who I helped born an' *entirely* raised, 'ceptin' fer a few interferences by his ma, of course, is a honey-bird a-flyin' straight!" and with this bit of information she burst into a happy ha-ha.

But Mr. Biggs maintained his silence.

Chapter FOUR



ISS HOPE'S car threaded its way down a dark, dirty East-side street, stopped, and the three occupants got out.

The street went on for a few yards further, then, seeming to become discouraged at its own gloom and squalor, suddenly plunged down to the river in an attempt to end its life.

The Lighthouse Keeper sighed as she looked about her, but quickly smiling again turned to her companions and said, "Come, I'll show you a veritable rose blooming in the wilderness, for in here," indicating the doorway directly opposite, "lives the sweetest and most happy creature I have ever known." And taking Victor's hand they all three disappeared within.

The narrow, rickety stairs up which they climbed led to a short, dark corridor, and feeling her way

down this quickly, Miss Hope knocked several times upon a door at the end.

"Oh, it's the Lighthouse Lady, Mother," they heard a childish voice exclaim, while the peg-peg of crutches grew nearer, and as the door was thrown open the elfish figure of a girl-woman appeared before them.

"Welcome, Friend," she exclaimed quaintly, smiling toward Miss Hope, who stepped forward and laid her hand on the little hollow shoulder.

"How do you do, Meggy? I've brought two friends to see you."

She smiled graciously, and as Mr. Vaughn looked down at her a lump rose in his throat. It seemed to him he had never seen so pure a face, and as his companion introduced him and Victor her great dark eyes, though blind, seemed to look into his very heart and he bowed his head involuntarily at the exquisite sweetness and patience of their expression.

"How's your mother, Meggy?" Miss Hope asked, walking into the room. "Oh, there she is," spying a huddled creature on the bed, and crossing over continued in the same cheery tone, though louder: "Good afternoon, Mrs. Miller; how are you?"

The woman's fretful face scowled into hers. It was a face that had never seen pleasure, but only the drudgery of slaving for the bare necessities of life, and grumbling something inaudible she turned away without response.

Meggy, her delicate cheeks flushing at this dis-

courtesy, said quickly: "She didn't hear you, I guess, Miss Hope. She's felt very badly of late. But won't your friends look at my bags? They are *so* pretty," and she led them across the room to where a small loom for bead and silk weaving stood threaded. "I've gotten orders enough to keep me busy for a month, and here are some already finished," handing Miss Hope several woven of various colored silks with silver, gold and crystal beads running throughout. Then turning to the two strangers: "Do you want to see me weave? Miss Hope makes me show everyone, it's such beautiful work for a little 'ten eyes' like me." She seated herself before the loom and, beginning to work the shuttle back and forth, smiled up at them. "See," she said, running her fingers over the colored strands, "it's quite simple and *so* nice to feel that I'm weaving rainbows and sunsets and dewdrops for someone who will love them as I do, and who will see them with their really truly eyes! Sometimes I think I must be about the luckiest girl in the world!" and she ceased weaving in her earnestness, "for so many people have to work on ugly things, you know, and I never do. But it wasn't always so," groping out to take Miss Hope's hand between her two frail ones, "before the Lady of the Lighthouse found me."

Mr. Vaughn looked from one to the other of these two, so widely different, yet each fulfilling so perfectly her duty in life, and he determined at the first

opportunity to help the brave little cripple before him.

In a few moments more Miss Hope said they must go, and with many affectionate words of cheerful adieu led her visitors to the door. "Don't forget the party to-morrow, Meggy dear," she called at parting, as they left the tiny room which held, in spite of all its darkness, a beam of God's real sunshine.

"Isn't Meggy wonderful?" she asked softly as they reached the hallway. "We of the Lighthouse call her the 'Radiant;' for whenever she is able to leave her deaf, half-paralyzed old mother she comes to the Lighthouse and radiates happiness and good cheer for us all while helping the other women with their weaving."

"Tell me about her, Light-lady!" Victor begged. "Is it night for her, too, 'cause the fever got in her eyes?"

"No, dearest. She is so because her mother worked in a dark cellar before she was born," Miss Hope answered sadly. "Or at least that is the reason she is crippled. She herself made it 'night' by having to work there also, when her eyes were almost as sick as her poor little back. But I must go in here," she interrupted herself, stopping at another door further down the hall. "Mr. Vaughn, you and Victor go to the car and wait for me, please," and she left them to go down the stairs alone.

A little while later she came down, and getting in beside them the motor chug-chugged its way slowly

from the street in which they were to the next around the corner.

Miss Hope's expression was very sad as she sat silent, her thoughts intent upon her experience of the last few minutes. Presently, however, she said bitterly: "The dear little blind fellow, son of a blind mother, whom I have just left won't live much longer, but after all that's the one thing in his whole life that is a blessing. And there are many like him, victims of 'the sins of the fathers visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation,' and because of that he, an innocent little child, is suffering untold agony and sorrow now. And our government allows such a marriage! But here we are at our next stop!" she exclaimed with relief. "This is an S. O. S. call that reached us this morning through one of our life-saving crew who is stationed near here. We've had two such calls to-day," she went on as they began to alight. "One is hopeless; a case of poisoning. Both eyes gone, optic nerve atrophied from drinking liquor adulterated with wood alcohol. Another crime to be put down to our government's carelessness! But he, poor fellow, is probably out of his suffering ere now, and I hope to find this person not so seriously ill. So all hands to the rescue!" and entering the house before them they started up the stairs.

The house was apparently an estranged twin to the one they had just left, save it was more gloomy; and as they mounted higher and higher its aspect be-

came even more forlorn, until they reached the top floor and Miss Hope knocked upon a door.

There was no response; so after waiting a minute more she knocked again, this time insistently, saying as the knocks reverberated loudly, "It's strange no one answers. I'm sure this is the place," and stooping she peered closely at the door's number, only half discernible in the dimness. "Yes, this is the address given me."

"Try the knob," Mr. Vaughn suggested. "The room may be vacant, after all."

As he spoke, however, the door was cautiously cracked, and the young though haggard face of a blind man appeared before them, sick with fright. The room in which he stood was small, lighted only by a tiny air-shaft, but even in this semi-darkness they could see his pathetic condition.

"Good afternoon. Is this Mr. Gilroy?" Miss Hope asked in her cheeriest tone. "And may we come in? I'm the Lady of the Lighthouse, and these are my two 'Torch-bearers,'" stepping forward with her two companions.

The man's face brightened and he stood aside to let them pass, his hands trembling as he caught at the door for support. "Oh, yes, ma'am," he said, cordially. "Sure and I'm glad to see you. I thought at first as how you were the rent collector come to put me out," and he tried to laugh. "But it's you I'm wishing to have come since the laddie told me about you this morning, for I'm needing of the light

if there be any left for a fellow like me," and he reached out his hand to her appealingly.

"There certainly is, plenty of it!" Miss Hope assured him. "'Light through work,' and you shall learn everything you wish to. But tell me about yourself. How long have you been blind?"

The man shuddered, then answered slowly with a choke in his voice: "I don't know. I've—lost—count. 'Twas from the hospital they sent me home like this, and 'tis many a day that I've been praying the good Mother to let me die!"

"But how did it happen?" Miss Hope asked sympathetically, her own voice near the breaking point. "Tell me about it. It was an accident, wasn't it?" noticing the sunken eye-sockets and the tiny scars upon his forehead.

"Yes, ma'am," he said. "'Twas in the Vaughn Chemical Works—"

"What!" Mr. Vaughn cried in horror, dropping Victor's hand and striding forward.

"Yes, sir, the Vaughn Chemical Works."

Miss Hope motioned Mr. Vaughn not to interrupt again, and the man proceeded:

"'Twas one of the small tanks. It exploded like and caught me in the eyes," throwing both hands up in an expressive gesture to show them how sudden it had been. "And when I come to I'd been fetched to the hospital and the nurse told me how it was with me, me being bandaged and——"

"But weren't you wearing any kind of protective eye-shield?" the lady interrupted.

"No, ma'am, the furnishing of such wasn't there," he answered.

"What an outrage!" she exclaimed hotly, turning on Mr. Vaughn, her eyes blazing with indignation.

He flushed, but said nothing. The horror of the thing seemed to have gripped him and he found he could not speak. Never before had he realized the need of safety devices for his workmen, danger of injury seemed so remote, but now as he stared at the pitiful wreck before him his conscience smote him bitterly and he groaned aloud. If only he had taken warning from the occasional press accounts of such accidents. True, he argued, his laboratory was too large for him to give its every detail his personal attention. Yet if he didn't, who would? he asked himself.

"Why didn't you send for me, man, when it happened?" he said aloud in a hoarse voice.

The man looked puzzled, and seeing of course he did not understand the situation, Miss Hope added, "This is Mr. Vaughn himself talking to you, Mr. Gilroy."

"Oh, I—I didn't know," he muttered, involuntarily backing away.

"But why didn't you send for me when you were hurt?" Mr. Vaughn again asked. "You should have done so."

"I—didn't dare, sir," the man said, his hands

clinchng and unclinchng in his nervous anxiety. "Sure and the boss told me, when he come to the hospital, that I'd get never a penny of damages if I did. He said the company would pay me if I didn't be worrying nobody, but that——"

"Who told you such a thing?" Mr. Vaughn broke in. "What was his name?"

"Mr. Smith," he answered. "And he said as how he was your right hand man and was acting for you in the matter, and——"

"Yes, yes, he is," Mr. Vaughn agreed, quick to correct any possible criticism of the young manager who he knew had been trying to shield his business interests. "But this is——"

"Capital against labor as usual, he probably thinks," Miss Hope interrupted in a bitter tone; then realizing she should not have suggested such a thought to the man, she shut her lips tightly together.

Mr. Vaughn frowned. "This is a very different case from the general run," he finished. "Have you done anything about it? Seen your lawyer, or anything?"

"Sure, sir, and I have not," he replied. "A friend of mine—the only one I've got," he added sadly, "said as how it wouldn't do no good. She's an old crippled lady next door," he explained. "She was after saying they'd just take my money, like they done hers, and that the courts was so slow I'd be starved before my case come up anyhow, and——"

"She's right there!" Miss Hope again broke in,

unable to control her indignation; then biting her lip ceased while Mr. Vaughn proceeded:

"I'm only asking because I want to know exactly where we stand," speaking to the man, but looking towards Miss Hope haughtily. "There's no necessity for the law. I shall gladly pay you anything—that the lady here thinks is just," he finished hurriedly.

"Oh, sir, and sure it's kind you are!" the man exclaimed, his pale face flushing. "I was just thinking before the laddie come this morning that—that—I'd have to end it all; but now—"

"Now," Miss Hope exclaimed cheerfully, "we of the Lighthouse will show you how much light there *is* left for a fellow like you. We are going there now, and I shall send a nurse to you at once. Also Dr. Chear, the captain of our Lighthouse crew. They will make you comfortable here for to-day," glancing about the disheveled room, "and to-morrow we'll get you a nicer room near the Lighthouse, if Mr. Vaughn agrees," looking questioningly towards him.

He nodded and she went on: "And then you can come to us every day and begin learning to see with your fingers. Little Victor can tell you about that," petting the boy who had all this time been clinging to her skirts. "Can't you, dear?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Night-man," he said eagerly. "You can have ten eyes just like me instead of two. Didn't you know it? And I'll let you help me be a Torch-

bearer. I'm a Scout, you know, the littlest one there is; and you can't be a Scout," he sympathized, "'cause your talk-noise is too grown up!"

At the whimsical quaintness of these words a smile broke across the young man's face, transforming it into something wonderfully brave and beautiful, or so it seemed to Miss Hope, and she felt confident that the first ray from her Lighthouse beacon had reached and begun to rescue another darkened soul.

"So," she said, drawing nearer the door, "good-bye until to-morrow. We are having a party for the women and girls then, and if you'll come to the Lighthouse I'll show you some of our brightest 'Lights.' And in the meantime don't forget this. It was said by one of the bravest blind men we know about, Postmaster-General Fawcett of England; and to-day we can find no better advice to give:

"'Do what you can to act as though you were not blind. Be of good courage and help yourself'—and *we'll* do the rest," and smiling she and her companions opened the door and passed out.

* * * * *

"What would be fair?" Mr. Vaughn asked as they drove away. "God knows I want to make it up to the poor fellow the best I can. It's horrible! I can never forgive myself!"

Miss Hope looked into his troubled eyes, then spoke with gentle sympathy.

"I'm more sorry for you than I can say, Mr.

Vaughn. Forgive me for my bitterness just now. I understand how you must feel——”

“Oh, and I understand your feelings too,” he hastened to say. “I don’t blame you for being bitter. My surprise is you aren’t more so, seeing, as you constantly must, suffering which might so easily have been avoided!”

“Yes, that’s just it,” she said. “It seems so cruel, so selfish, and there’s so much of it! We are all of us too careless about the most precious things in life, any way; even life itself, when another’s—and for what?” she continued. “A little more money, or pleasure, or comfort for a few years; that’s all.” “Why, do you know, Mr. Vaughn,” she continued “that we are still far behind England in the prevention of blindness? However, that deficiency is fast being overcome, and I believe Helen Keller’s prophecy will yet come true; bless her! She says that in the near future our blind institutions, to which we now point with pride, will stand as monuments to our ignorance and to the useless suffering which we have caused.”

“But what must I do for this poor fellow?” he asked. “Of course he can’t work now, and——”

“Indeed he *can* work!” she broke in vigorously. “That’s the only thing left for him to do. Work means everything to the blind! Pleasant work in cheerful surroundings that will enable him to be self-supporting, thus standing on an equal footing with the sighted. To work side by side with them

will mean more to him than all else, I feel sure. It has in every case like his I've ever seen."

"Then you don't think I should give him money?" Mr. Vaughn asked in surprise.

"Oh, yes, certainly I do," she answered. "But don't give it as charity at any time. Pay him an income, say, as 'damages,' and then after we at the Lighthouse have taught him to see with his fingers, give him a job."

"But I can't use a blind workman," he argued.

"Why not?" she asked quickly. "There are few positions of trust, even of the highest order, that have not been filled by the blind. We have in this country a blind senator, a blind judge, inventors, and not a few efficient instructors of the seeing. You have a telephone service, haven't you? He can operate that. We have our graduates filling such positions quite as well as if they could see. Or better still, give him a place in your stenographic department. He seems a bright enough fellow to become a good stenographer with the proper opportunity. The present-day shorthand machines, that are used to take dictation in raised type, make it quite easy and most pleasant work. Our Lighthouse office force is almost entirely blind, you know. He might become a wireless telegraph operator, anything in fact along those lines. We are turning out competent men and women every day. Or, if all these things are beyond him, let him make the brooms, mops, brushes that you use in the laboratory; and re-

bottom the chairs. These things you should buy from us anyway. We make yearly contracts, and your order will mean a great deal to several of my workers. But goodness!" she laughed, her face sparkling in her enthusiasm, "I could go on all day telling you how this poor fellow that we've just rescued can be useful to you. Ten eyes and a brave heart, such as my other 'Night-children' have, will soon be his, too, I feel sure, and then you'll find him not only useful, but a treasure indeed! You just see if I'm not right!" And she laughed up into his serious face confidently.

"You're *always* right—Lady of the Lighthouse!" he said, looking at her with frank admiration.

A decorative illustration on the left side of the page. It features a large, stylized, black-outlined letter 'M' that serves as a vertical support. A long, thin, wavy line, representing a woman's hair or a ribbon, starts from the top of the 'M', loops around the top of the page, and then flows down the left side, ending in a small loop at the bottom. The background is a light cream color.

Chapter Five

MAMMY, you're a regular cow-tail!" Victor exclaimed crossly as he heard the woman enter the room. "Hurry up or we'll be late for the party."

"Law, honey, we'se got oodles of time. An' 'sides dat, we can't go yit, dar's somebody downstairs wants to see yer," she answered, going over to him and laying her hand on his curly head.

"Who?" he asked indifferently, still tugging at the stocking he was putting on.

"A new doctor, darlin', and ——"

"Then he shan't come in!" the boy exploded angrily, jumping up like a flash and slamming the door. "Doctors is no-count-tommy-rots and I won't have 'em!"

"Shiny!" she ejaculated, shocked. "Whar

you git dat strong word? You know dat ain't no lady-like way fer a young gem'man to talk."

"Well, it's a Scout way," he answered, "'cause I heard the Chivalry Scout say it yesterday; and I won't see him, I won't!"

"Now I doan see why you'se taken up wid dat notion so strong," Mammy argued gently, while Victor continued to push his back against the door with all his might. "Doctors is puffec'ly harmless as I kin see, but you'se jes like one of my fust husban's, I reckon. He wouldn't have none of dem eider, an' he finally jes died a natural death in de middle of de night one night. But dar! he an' yo' pa's a-comin'!" she warned, hearing footsteps mounting the stairs. "You better take yo' back away an' speak to dem pretty when dey comes in."

"I won't!" Victor again muttered, pushing against the door harder than ever.

Mammy looked at him thoughtfully and his big sightless eyes stared back at her with defiance. How could she persuade him to mind, she wondered. She could never bear to force him in anything now, the poor baby! And her sympathy at once getting the better of her she put her hand upon his curls again, saying tenderly:

"Den yer doan hafter, darlin', if you'se skeered! Jes' you hide 'hind Mammy an' she'll tell 'em youse gone out wid Mr. Biggs. Dey shan't pester my Shiny-boy to death—no dey shan't!" and she made as if to hide him with her skirts.

But at these words a change came over the child, and stepping away from the door he faced about, head thrown back and eyes gazing straight in front of him bravely. It was the fearless posture that Miss Hope had taught him, and as the door opened he said steadily, "I'm not scared! And I won't tell a hide-lie, 'cause I'm a Scout!"

Mr. Vaughn and a strange gentleman entered. "Hello, Little-man!" he cried gaily. "I've brought Dr. Frantz to see you. You won't mind seeing him," noticing the boy's flushed face and at once understanding the situation, "because he's the doctor that made your 'Light-lady' see. He lives 'way across the ocean, and has cured lots of little boys like you; so she sent for him. Come, speak up like Daddy's Little-man!"

Victor hesitated a moment, then recalling the many things Miss Hope had told him about this famous doctor, walked up to him and held out his hand.

"Why, how do you do, nice little fellow?" Dr. Frantz said with a slightly foreign accent. "Can you see me?"

"Stoop down," Victor commanded, his nervousness immediately vanishing at the charm of the doctor's kindly voice.

Dr. Frantz stooped obediently, and quickly feeling his bearded face the child announced: "Yes; you look like a Teddy-bear!"

The doctor laughed but drew away, and flashing

a small light in the boy's eyes asked, "Can you see me *now?*"

"No," Victor answered. "I see with my finger-eyes, 'cause I'm a night-boy. Didn't you know it?"

"Why, no," he said in an interested tone. "What a smart little fellow! Come sit on my knees and tell me all about it." And Victor consenting, he went on with his examination unsuspected, while Mr. Vaughn explained in a whisper to Mammy the hopeful import of his visit.

When the examination was over and they had gone on downstairs again, she stood dreamily watching her precious little master with a loyal light of happiness shining in her eyes. There was a hope, a wonderful hope, long held out to them by the Lady of the Lighthouse, and now seconded by this stranger, and as she thought over and over Mr. Vaughn's whispered words to her her heart sang, and she started humming a weird tune of thanksgiving, when suddenly she recalled herself to the present and breaking off exclaimed excitedly:

"Lawdy, ain't dis a happy happening worl', anyhow!" Then turning to Victor: "And now darlin', you'se got to hurry sho' 'nough or us will be late to dat party. So put on yo' 'high geer' as Mr. Vicky say to de automobilly-goat—I calls it dat on account of its manners sometimes," she chuckled—"and come on, let's be a-movin'!"

"All right, I'm ready," he agreed, giving a final tug to his stocking.

And so leaving the room they went out and were very soon entering the Lighthouse, not many blocks away.

"Why, there's Daddy-boy's talk-noise—and the Light-lady's too," Victor announced as his quick ear caught the sound of his father's and Miss Hope's voices in earnest conversation. "And there's—there's Mr. Night-man's, too," laughing with pleasure at this display of his own acuteness. "He's come to help me be a Torch-bearer, Mammy; 'cause he's all sorry and dark inside like I used to be."

"Humph, hit appears to me Mr. Vicky's gittin' pow'ful *homeless*," Mammy said, again chuckling and taking notice only of the couple whom it so delighted her to see together. "He's a reg'lar suffer-gette what wid hurryin' away from home to 'tend to other folkses' business an'—Good evenin', Ma'am, Miss Fust-cousin-to-de-angels," bowing and speaking aloud as Miss Hope came swiftly forward to meet Victor.

"Hello, Light-lady's sunshine," she said, catching the child to her in a cuddling hug. "All ready for the party?"

"Yer-bet-yer-life!" Victor answered, returning the hug with interest.

Miss Hope laughed; but Mammy, very much mortified at the manner of his answer, drew him from out the lady's encircling arms and shook him reproachfully.

"Ain't yer 'shame yo'self? I'se a good min' to

wash yo' mouf out wid soap, a blaspheming like dat," she scolded. "You'se gittin' so yer talks jes like dese little Arabs or Americans or such dat runs de streets, an' I'se——"

"I *am* an American," Victor broke in proudly. "The Chivalry Scout said so."

"Well he don't know what he's talking 'bout!" Mammy exploded indignantly. "De idee! An' ev'ry one of us Vaughns from Virginia! You jes'——"

But Miss Hope's laughter drowned the rest of her sentence, and feeling hurt as well as puzzled at such unwarranted mirth she ceased talking and followed them as they began slowly moving down the hall.

"Here's Mr. Gilroy, Victor," Miss Hope said as they reached the waiting men and stopped an instant. "I've been showing him the swimming pool and how our men and boys play ten-pins, keeping their score in raised figures, and all our playtime things," she smiled. "And to-morrow we'll take him to the men's workshop so he can begin at once to see 'Light through work.' But now," taking the dazed man's arm and leading him down the hall, "Victor will help me show you the rest of our Lighthouse, won't you, Shiny-boy?"

"Yes," he answered eagerly, trotting along holding to her hand. "Let's show him the Scouts and the Campies, and take him up on the roof to the party."

"All right, dear, presently," Miss Hope agreed;

"but right now we'll go in here," indicating a doorway a little further on. "Come with us, Mr. Vaughn. And wouldn't you like to also, Mammy? I must see what my fairy rainbow-weavers are creating to-day. Besides, Victor, I have something to tell you before we join the others."

"The party," she explained to the man holding onto her arm, "is given by my little 'night' Campfire girls to their more fortunate sister-organization of the public schools. That is one of the things we try to do here, teach the blind children to take their places in the play-time world with the seeing, just as we teach you grown-ups to take yours; for from experience we've found that being in the society of seeing children helps the little blindies overcome many defects caused by their infirmity. It's charming to see them playing together, too, for they each help the other in many ways, the seeing children acting as the blind ones' guides in most of the games. I'm sure you're going to like us," she concluded, smiling and patting the man's trembling arm reassuringly as they entered the doorway.

The big sunny room, filled with perfumed flowers and the songs of birds, now a bee-hive of busy workers, was the same one that had held the holiday crowd of Victor's first day at the Lighthouse, and as Miss Hope began walking about it, followed by the others, she explained to Mr. Gilroy the work that was going on before them. A few lace-makers and basket-weavers sat about working at their pretty

tasks, while dozens of women and girls, their faces filled with the beauty of contentment, sat before looms of all sizes busily engaged in working shuttles back and forth; and as they click-clicked rhythmically each one of them knew with a certainty of joy that she was weaving the web of her independence.

It was wonderful to see the gaily colored rugs, table-covers, draperies, cobwebs of lace and rainbow-tinted bead-bags growing to their lovely completion. No wonder that Miss Hope called these workers her fairies, for their exquisite work did certainly seem full of magic, and as Mr. Vaughn took in the happy scene he could not help thinking of all the misery these same people must have endured before the Lady of the Lighthouse found them, and in his heart he sent up a prayer of thankfulness for her very existence.

"Shiny-boy," she said, holding tightly to the little hand, "that Teddy-bear doctor thinks he can make you see; he has just told me so; but it will be months before he can try. I tell you," she hastened to explain, "because we are all very hopeful over it, and I don't believe in keeping even the barest chance of hope from you. He made *me* see, you know, and because of that, and our friendship, he came across the ocean to see *you*. And he believes your case is just like mine was. Do you understand me, darling?"

"Y-e-s," he answered, only dimly comprehending her words, but feeling a thrill at her tone.

"He's going home today," she continued, her voice very sad at the remembrance that she could not do for this man, who had done so much for her, what he had again asked her to do, "but next fall when you've grown to be a stronger boy he's coming back to try and make you see. Understand?"

"Yes," he said, clinging to her, however, and looking up in troubled doubt. "But if he makes me a day-boy, can I be a Scout?"

"You loyal little soldier!" she exclaimed laughing, but with moistened eyes. "Of course you can. We need both kinds of Scouts, those who can see and those who have quick ears to warn us of approaching danger."

"Then I'll let him come," he decided positively.

"And now to the roof, Lights of the Lighthouse," she called in a clear tone to all the workers, having completed her cheery, praise-giving round. "Come, put up your work, for it's time to play!" And as they obeyed and sprang up with eager assent she led the way out to the elevator.

Alighting they stepped upon a roof that had been idealized by sweet-smelling vines and flowers planted by loving hands, and a sea of happy faces met her gaze. Near the door a group of old, white-haired women were seated calmly as though sure of the safe harbor they were in, their finger-eyes examining each stitch as they felt their way up and down

the long seams; and in front of them, both hands fairly flying over the pages of a big book that rested upon her knees, little Meggy, the Lighthouse Radiant, sat reading aloud to them. A little beyond this group the blind orchestra was playing well the merriest of tunes that swelled out upon the soft spring air in waves of joyous sound, while seemingly oblivious of all else rose the shouts and laughter of nearby girls as they danced and roller-skated in time to the music, hair flying, faces all aglow, a veritable whirlpool in their exuberance of spirits.

"Aren't they splendid?" Miss Hope said, smiling toward the children. "Who'd ever guess that half of them can't see?" Then drawing Victor closer to her as her eyes suddenly clouded, she turned to Mr. Vaughn, saying in a changed tone, "and most of them are needlessly blind, too, poor dears! Cases of criminal carelessness—infant ophthalmia. It's simply inexcusable that a great government like ours should allow such a shameful thing to occur!" and her face flushed in just indignation. "With proper midwife laws, whereby every nurse and doctor in every town and city would have to use proper prophylactics, and swear they had done so when registering a birth, all this kind of blindness at least would cease."

"Our brutal carelessness is *horrible!*" Mr. Vaughn agreed, remembering the man at his side and the terrible lesson which he, the victim of *his* careless-

ness, had taught him only the day before. "I wish——"

"Oh, but after all we mustn't forget that we're living in the best age in history," Miss Hope hastily put in in her exquisitely optimistic voice. "It's hard to remember sometimes, but we are. People may say what they please about the social and moral conditions, but I, personally, don't believe there ever was a time when there were so many wonderful, beautiful things being done for the betterment of conditions generally as there are right now! We hear more about crime, degradation, vice, perhaps, but that's because it's being uprooted," throwing her head back; "and oh, it's glorious to be in the fight! Isn't it?" turning to Mr. Vaughn.

"It's glorious to be winning as you are doing," he answered, looking with amusement at a laughing, whooping group of young Campfire girls who at the moment danced up in front of them more like wild Indians than girls. "It's glorious, too, to see what normal, healthy girls you're making out of all these little 'night children' in spite of their great affliction."

"I'm not making them so," Miss Hope hastened to reply. "It's having the *opportunity* that is doing it. That's all most of them need. The opportunity to use the other faculties that God has given them and not be treated as though they were useless. If only the public realized that!" she sighed. "It's so terribly hard to make them understand that by educat-

ing the blind, giving them the opportunity of competing with the seeing, that they are not only helping the blind help themselves, but are also relieving the State of an unnecessary burden. 'There are none so blind as those who will not see,' however," she quoted, "and at present there is too little being done to give them that opportunity."

"But the blind asylums and State Commissions?" Mr. Vaughn questioned.

"The Commissions are excellent things in the States where they exist," she answered, "and so are the asylums, of course; but some of the asylums still haven't the right idea, for they, like the public, are far too apt to consider the inmates helpless creatures whose only due is to be housed and fed, treated with tolerant kindness and sympathy, and taught next to nothing. Of course that is not true of them all by any means. But here I go sermonizing, as usual," she broke off, laughing. "Shiny-boy, don't you want to dance? We'll go over there to the May-pole; that's lots of fun!" And assuring the others of her immediate return she lead the little fellow to a far corner where a group of small girls were merrily dancing the May-pole dance, skipping about among the gay streamers of colored ribbons in an infinite variety of pretty figures. Victor, his face shining with the joy of the unusual, clasped his ribbon and danced gaily away after them, while Miss Hope started on her return to the others.

As she did so, and began threading her way in

and out 'mongst dancing girls and women who had quickly crowded up from the workrooms below, the orchestra struck up "The Wearing of the Green." With a shout of pleasure the group nearest Mr. Vaughn and his companion joined their voices to the sound of the instruments, and the tune, dear as it is to all Irish hearts, floated out gay and free above the noise of the merry-makers

With eyes glowing at this show of her "night-children's" spirits, the Lady of the Lighthouse reached the men and was about to speak, when Mr. Vaughn laid a hand of warning upon her arm and looked significantly towards the man at his side. She allowed her eyes to follow his, and as she saw the other's face she caught her breath in a quick intake of surprise. All misery and suffering seemed to have passed away from it, and in its place there shone a great happiness transfiguring his whole being as he listened to the singing near him. Then with a gesture of happy abandon he raised his voice and joined them. Clear and mellow as the spring-time air, sweet as the perfumed flowers about them, it rang out true and glad, soaring up and up, clearer and clearer in its perfect beauty, until with a lovelier note than the rest it drowned every other sound and went on mounting into the heavens—alone.

"O-h-h!—oh!" Miss Hope exclaimed, breaking the stillness that had enveloped the whole assemblage. "How beautiful!" And she drew her hand from Mr. Vaughn's arm, where she had uncon-

sciously laid it in the first rush of pleasure at the man's singing. "Why didn't you tell me you were a singer, Mr. Gilroy? You have a beautiful, *beautiful* voice!"

The man looked dazed for a moment, then as the realization of what he had done came to him he flushed and shrank away from her timidly.

"Ah, ma'am, and 'tis the Blarney-stone you're after kissing," he said, trying to smile. "And it's a fool I was to holler out like that; but the good old tune got right into me heart and——"

"But I'm serious," Miss Hope interrupted him. "You have a wonderful voice."

"Ah," he smiled sadly, "'tis kind you are to a poor blind man, but——"

"Look here, man," she said earnestly, "don't you know you can sing? Hasn't anyone ever told you what a glorious gift God has given you? Why, you've got what thousands would give their very lives to possess!" she continued, carried away by her enthusiasm. "With proper training you could do almost anything with a voice like yours! It would never in the world do to make anything but a singer out of *him*," she said, turning to Mr. Vaughn. "We'll get a good teacher at once and begin having him taught. All the best music comes in the raised type, you know, so he can be taught very easily. What do you say, Mr. Gilroy?"

The man stood still for a moment, his shoulders

stiffening as though from fright; then trembling violently he spoke in a hoarse whisper:

"What do I say? What do I say?" he repeated, and fumbled out in front of him for her hand. "Sure and I say," he finished, his voice gaining strength as he went on, "that the blessed Mother has sent you; for all my life 'tis the chance the like of which you offer me now that I've been longing and praying for," and a sob broke in his throat.

"Then you shall certainly have it," she assured him, her own voice hoarse with feeling. "For there's nothing in the world more beautiful than to be able to use the talent that has been given you; is there?" again turning for sympathetic understanding to Mr. Vaughn.

"Yes," he said slowly, looking at her with deep seriousness. "There are two things *more* beautiful. One is a life like yours—Lady of the Lighthouse—and the other——" but turning on his heel he strode over towards Victor, leaving his sentence unfinished.



IN THE CITY the summer with its hot, thirsty days and restless, wakeful nights had come and gone and the Lady of the Lighthouse still stood at her post waiting, watchful, ever ready to hold out a helping hand to those who needed her guidance. Each one of her crew, thanks to her, had had an outing in the country, where basking in the sunshine midst the songs of birds and scent of growing things they had become happier and rosier, until now at the first sign of winter they took up their tasks with renewed energy, resolving more earnestly than ever to be a guiding Light to some other traveller in the world of Darkness.

Little Meggy, pale and sweet as a lily, came as usual to shed her radiance among the other



workers, but she seemed to be drawing nearer and nearer the Parent who had lent her to the world for only a short time, and it was with a heavy heart that Miss Hope watched her flower-face growing more fragile as the days went by.

Mr. Gilroy, happy and healthy, was sailing ahead, however; and as he met and breasted each new wave of experience in his Ocean of Night with the Lighthouse beacon to guide him, his happiness was a constant source of inspiration to the Lighthouse Keeper, and she felt thankful for the example of pluck and good courage that he, a beginner in blindness, set all the rest.

With eager fingers he had quickly learned to read the many combinations of raised dots that form the type used by blind people, mastering music reading in the same way, so that now as the months flew by and he knew that his lifelong ambition was being realized, his heart was full to overflowing with joy.

Victor all this time, with Mammy as Guardian Angel and the little Director of Chivalry as frequent guest, had been living in an old-fashioned farm-house nestled among the Berkshire Hills. During the summer Miss Hope had made many trips to see him, each time writing a careful report of his condition to Dr. Frantz. She had had, as Dr. Frantz knew, a great deal of practical experience among her blind, besides which she read and studied all causes of blindness continually; so he felt she was entirely capable of judging the boy's condition until such time

as he could come over and take charge personally.

It was with a glad heart, then, that she saw Victor's general health improving so rapidly. Round and rosy as a little cherub he danced in and out of the woods and fields all day long, his finger-eyes finding much that was beautiful to model into "feel-pictures," and his whole being radiating the happiness that the dawning knowledge of this gift was producing in him.

He and his companion, too, had been laying a deep-rooted plot, letters flying back and forth between them and the Director of Chivalry every day, while Mr. Vaughn acted as their go-between after his every week-end visit.

The plot, originally Victor's, had now grown and spread until all the Scouts in the Lighthouse company were eagerly talking of it and impatiently awaiting his return; for ever since Miss Hope had organized them, in her earnest endeavor to give her "night-children" every pleasure and advantage enjoyed by all others not thus afflicted, they in return had longed ardently to do something for her to show their love and appreciation; but no satisfactory plan had yet suggested itself to their minds. And now Victor, the youngest among them, and only a Scout because she had asked them to overlook his lack of proper years, thought of this:

They should make her their Colonel!

It was a wonderful idea, and the enthusiasm it called forth spread like wild-fire through the ranks,

each boy feeling in his loyal approval that it was the one honor of all honors that was really fitting for such as she.

So centering his whole heart upon the scheme Victor worked away upon it, discussing it almost continually with his father and his other companions in the mountains, and at last he decided that he himself would make the insignia by which the great honor she had won should be known to all the world. With this in view, therefore, he modelled a medal with fingers which, though small, seemed to recognize and reproduce almost instinctively the beauty of harmonious line and form. Mr. Vaughn had promised that he would have it put into bronze so that she might always wear it. This new indication of his son's talent was really a very creditable piece of work, and not only filled him with pride but made him happy as well, because he knew it to be still another sign of the boy's devotion to her whom *he* had grown to love more than all else in life.

And now that it was all finished and plans for its presentation arranged, Victor, with his father, took the train to the city and hurried to the Lighthouse, filled with eagerness at the prospect of once again joining the fun that was always going on there.

As they neared its doors he strained more and more at Mr. Vaughn's hand, unable to curb his excitement and every moment wanting to break into a run. Suddenly a sound of merry voices and the tramping of many feet reached them, and he pulled

away and rushed headlong up the few familiar steps.

"It's my Scouties, Daddy-boy," he cried. "Hurry, they need us!" and opening the door he burst in upon them.

They stood in a long double row before him, their feet marking time, ready to march at the first word of command; and realizing that he was in the presence of his whole Scout company, Victor greeted them joyfully.

"Hey, fellers! It's me; I'm back!" and he rushed on towards them.

"Why Shiny!" Miss Hope exclaimed, catching hold of him and stopping his reckless dash. "How glad I am to see you! *Ughm-ughm*," and she squeezed him to her, smiling over his head at Mr. Vaughn, who was just entering. "Aren't you glad to see your 'Light-lady?'"

Victor hesitated the fraction of a second, then putting his arms solemnly about her neck as he thought of all the days he had spent away from her, he said slowly:

"I'm gladder than all the world full of beauty feel things, cause there's nothing feels as loving and nice as you do," trying again as he had often tried before to tell her of his love. "And it's all full of you forever and ever and ever. Didn't you know it?"

"You precious little love-maker! You haven't forgotten one bit, have you?" and she laughed happily as she turned to Mr. Vaughn. "Have you told him about this afternoon and—tomorrow?"

Mr. Vaughn nodded assent, hastening to say, however, "Not about tomorrow—until after this is over."

Fully understanding, she went on: "You must fall in line, Shiny, dear. Here's your drum." And leading him to the head of the column, which was his place as Littlest Scout and Special Drummer-boy, they all marched gaily out and down the street, flags flying, feet keeping time to his rat-a-tat-tat.

On they marched for several blocks until they came to a big armory decorated with the Stars and Stripes which everywhere mingled with, but did not outdo, the flag that stands for all that is bravest and best in our American boys of today. There they joined the throng that was entering its doors.

Martial music that thrilled everyone present was pouring in a perfect ecstasy of patriotism out of many brass-throated instruments, and as the little blind Scouts joined the companies of the seeing Scouts that had come from all over the country to greet their Chief of all Chiefs, they felt perhaps more keenly than all the others the beauty and inspiration of the occasion.

Miss Hope and Mr. Vaughn following them in found themselves in a huge hall crowded almost to suffocation with hundreds of other Scouts, gay in brand-new uniforms; and after saying a few words to those in charge the Lady of the Lighthouse led her company straight down through the parted throng and up to the reviewing stand. Then amidst the cheering of thousands, Lieutenant-General Sir

Baden-Powell, the hero of all Boy Scouts everywhere, entered the stand and began his address. In the stirring voice of a brave man speaking to his equals he spoke to them of bravery and honor and the duty of all Boy Scouts, especially those of a great and glorious country like America.

Cheer upon cheer greeted his every sentence, and once, as he looked about in acknowledgment, he noticed the Lighthouse troop seated behind him, rather out of things.

"Those boys are so far back they can't see," he objected to one of the men in charge. "Bring them forward."

"But they are a blind troop, General," the man answered, "and it would do no good."

The Lieutenant-General turned towards them and his expression softened as he saw their brave, sightless faces smiling into his.

"Then they shall be my Honor Guard," he said; "for it is a greater thing to have a brave heart than to have an eye that is clear and limbs that are straight."

"Let my Honor Guard step forward!"

With one accord the boys, thus honored above all others, stepped out in front of him and saluted, their faces bright with proud smiles. With heads thrown back, their eyes seemed to gaze straight into his, and to those watching the thought came that never was seen a more thrilling sight—these brave souls who were fighting their fight, and *winning*, with so many odds against them.

"And now," General Powell said, as he concluded his speech and descended from the stand during redoubled cheering, "remember this: that the best thing every Scout can do is to live up to the Scout law and the oath he has taken: To be Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, Reverent. And always 'Be Prepared.'"

* * * *

As the throng crowded its way out and Miss Hope stood telling the General all the things he wanted to know about her "Night Scouts," Victor, his cheeks flushing, his little body all atremble with eagerness, came up, followed by the rest of the troop. They swarmed about her, and he took her hand in his, thrusting something into the palm as he did so; then kissing the fingers let it go.

Before she could speak, or understand in the least what was happening, the Chivalry Scout stepped up also and in a voice full of emotion said:

"Lady of the Lighthouse! Today we have seen and been honored as Scouts by our Big Chief, and now we want to do honor to the one who has made this possible. The one who has made everything possible. The one whom we honor and love above all others," and his voice broke. "We, your blind Scout boys, elect you the *Colonel of our Regiment!*" Then turning to the excited boys he demanded, regaining the full strength of his voice, "What's the matter with Colonel Hope?"

"She's all right!" came the answer in a chorus of young voices that it was good to hear, and crowding together they cried in unison:

"Three cheers for the Lady of the Lighthouse!"

"Ra! Ra! Ra!
Here we are
Lighthouse Scout boys,
Ha-ha-ha!"

and laughing and pushing each other, they crowded closer to her in their affectionate good-will.

Tears sprang to Miss Hope's eyes, but looking at the little badge that Victor had made and thrust into her hand she quickly controlled her voice, and pinning it upon her breast, said gravely in her clear, sweet tones:

"Scouts, you are deserving of your title. No greater praise can I give you! I shall wear this badge always, for I am very proud of being your Colonel. God bless you, every one!" and stooping, she gathered the Littlest Scout into her arms, while Sir Baden-Powell and those with him stole quietly away from the scene.

"And now, Little-man," she said presently, unconsciously using the name his father used, for the first time, "we must go home. Come, Mr. Vaughn. We'll let the guides take the others back to the Lighthouse. I think Victor should rest, for he looks a little tired. And can I tell him about tomorrow—now?" she asked as they moved away.

Mr. Vaughn drew close to her and looking anxiously at his little son said in a troubled tone, "Yes, tell him if you think best, though personally I doubt the wisdom of it."

"I don't," she smiled, "for I've been preparing the way so long.

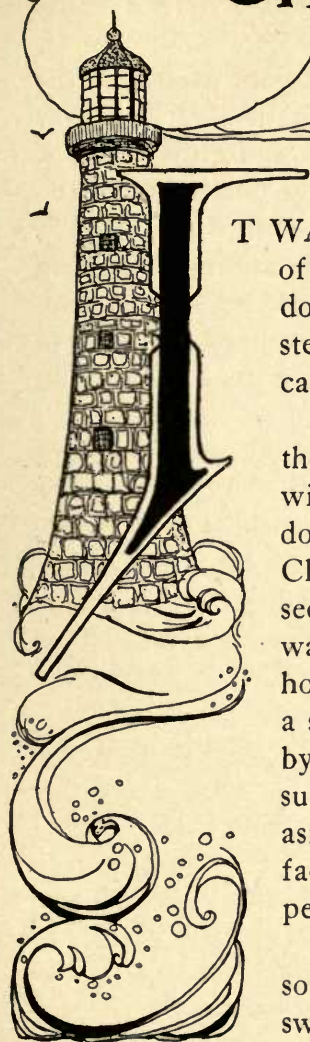
"Victor," and she held his hand tightly in hers, "the Teddy-bear doctor is coming tomorrow. He's going to put you to sleep with some funny, *funny* medicine, and then while you're dreaming he's going to try to help your eyes so that when you wake up, and he takes off all the bandages that he'll have to use at first, you *may* be able to see me. Aren't you glad?"

"Yes," the little fellow answered, stopping and reaching his hand up to caress her. "Yes, I'd rather see you than anybody in all the world, Light-lady!"

"Then God grant you shall, little son!" his father said, looking at them both with a light of great tenderness shining through the mist in his eyes.

* * * * *

Chapter Seven



IT WAS Christmas Day. The Lady of the Lighthouse closed the door behind her, ran down the steps and looked at the snow-caressed world about her.

All the brownstone houses across the street, save one, were festive with holly-wreaths in every window. But this, though wearing a Christmas air elsewhere, from its second story turned blind eyes toward her. In spite of that fact, however, she looked at them with a smile, and as though summoned by that smile one of the shades was suddenly but cautiously drawn aside, and the wrinkled, kindly face of an old negro woman peeped out at her.

With a wave of her hand and a song of hope in her heart she swiftly crossed the street, ran up

the steps and rang the bell just as she had done on that same day of Glad-tidings one year before.

The door opened, but this time James Henry's stolid face did not greet her, and she saw instead that of Mr. Vaughn.

"Merry Christmas!" he smiled, "'an' as many mo' as a flower like you deserves!" Then looking at her more seriously he continued, escorting her towards the drawing-room. "Dr. Frantz has asked to speak with you," and as she reached the door he stepped aside, allowing her to enter alone.

The doctor, seated near, quickly arose and coming forward took her hand.

"Dear," he said, and she frowned slightly at the word, "I have something to ask of you. Oh, not that," noticing her expression. "I shan't bother you with that again," and he looked sadly out to where Mr. Vaughn stood waiting. "I think I know how it is with you, now. It hurts; but if you are happy—I'm glad. I wish to speak about Victor. Today is the end of the waiting. His bandages must come off and——"

"Yes," she nodded, "I remembered; that's why I came so early."

"But I'm too big a coward to do it!" he finished desperately.

Miss Hope looked her surprise, and he continued: "Yes—I don't dare. It's probably the last thing that you'll ever ask me to do for you *now*, and if I've failed—if, after all, this little fellow——"

"Do you mean you'd like me to remove them?" she asked, understanding better than he had thought she would, and yet feeling in spite of herself an involuntary contempt for this side of his character which she alone knew.

"Yes," he said gratefully; "if I have succeeded it will give you great joy to be the first to discover it, and if I have failed—I won't see your disappointment."

"Very well," she consented, and started from the room. Then turning impulsively she took his hand in both of hers. "Whatever the result is," she said with deep feeling, "I thank you from the bottom of my heart for coming. I owe you more than anyone in the world I sometimes feel, and you can never know how distressed I am to have caused you one moment's sorrow or disappointment." And turning once again she left him to join the man in the hall.

"Come, Mr. Vaughn," she said, immediately starting upstairs. She did not want him to discover how nervous she was, now that the crisis had come, and she realized that all might not be well with little Victor. So she hurried on, not daring to look back.

"But isn't Dr. Frantz going first?" he asked in surprise, looking anxiously toward the drawing-room.

"No," she answered, "I'm going to be the first one to show my Shiny-boy the light if—if——" Then her courage breaking entirely she stopped, and throwing her hands out in a gesture of quick appeal, cried: "Oh, Mr. Vaughn, if the operation hasn't

been successful—if he shouldn't be able to see after all—you'll remember, won't you, that there's lots of happiness and 'light' left for him! You'll—perhaps it has been wrong for me to have made you believe he would be well," she interrupted herself reproachfully. "Perhaps——"

"Lady of the Lighthouse," Mr. Vaughn said, his voice vibrant with a great love, and striding up the stairs to her side he laid his hand on her shoulder, looking at her earnestly, "I understand how you feel; but you mustn't give way to this fear. Everything is going to be all right. And even though it shouldn't be, I know now that if he never sees again the world will not be really dark for him. He has gained your affection, and that is such a wonderful, beautiful light to him that he can never be wholly unhappy. Come, let's go to him." And taking her by the arm he led her gently up the stairs toward the dimly lit room above.

As they neared the door Mammy stepped back from it further into the hall's shadows, curtsying and mumbling something guiltily.

"Why, Mammy, what's the matter?" Miss Hope asked, noticing her sullen countenance. "Merry Christmas!" and she held out her hand.

"De same to you, Miss Fust-cousin-to-de-angels; but I doan feel merry nor nothin' else *dis* Christmas!" and she rolled her eyes indignantly towards the closed door.

"What's happened?" Mr. Vaughn asked, smiling at her childish sullenness.

"Now, Mr. Vicky!" she exclaimed, more indignant than ever, "you askin' me dat when you knows as well as I dose jes' 'zactly what's *always* a-happenin' since dat good-fer-nothin'-no-count strained nurse comed here an' taken my baby away from me!"

"But Mammy——"

"An' I tell yer right now I ain't gwiner stan' it much longer, neider," she went on angrily. "*Me*—his own flesh and blood nigger Mammy, bein' put out by dat po' white-trash dat ain't got no mo' sense dan what a horsepittel could strain into her! Why, what yer reckon she tole me jes' now?" she exploded, turning to Miss Hope. "She jes' *politely* opened de doe an' tole me to git out, dat 'her patient wanted to res'!" *Me* who's been restin' dat chile ever since befo' he was borned!" And tossing her head back she glared at the door in question as though trying to pierce it with her angry gaze and annihilate the offending one.

"Oh, I guess she didn't mean anything, Mammy," Miss Hope said, trying to soothe her. "She just didn't understand how long you'd been with Victor."

"Yes, ma'am, her did," Mammy stated. "She's jes' a reg'lar insulterer, dat's what she is! Why, de udder day she axed me whar I'd learned to work so good. An' I jes' tell yer, ma'am, I give her a piece of my inflammation sho' 'nough den! I tole her dat I wanted her to distinc'ly understan' dat I hadn't

never worked! Dat I was a Vaughn colored lady, I was, an' had always jes' lived wid my white fambly an' tooken care of deir chillens! Humph! *Me* workin'!

"Oh, Mammy, you mustn't be so jealous," Mr. Vaughn laughed. "I told you she'd be going soon."

"Jealyous? Jealyous?" the woman broke out again. "Now who say anything 'bout me bein' jealyous, Mr. Vicky? An' if I was, which I ain't, ain't it a puffec'ly lady-like convolution of de Lawd? Doan de Good-book tell us dat de green youngster called jealyousy shall enter into our hearts? But never-withstanding, I ain't jealyous. I'se jes' tired of somebody else a-holdin' my rightful place. Me wid my heart almos' burstin' wid need of 'tendin' my baby dat's sick, an' him a-longin' fer dese ole black arms, mos' likely."

"Well, you shall soon hold him all you want to, Mammy dear," Miss Hope cheered her, touched as always by her wealth of love and loyalty. "And I believe soon he will look up in your face and *see* how much you love him. I'm going right now to take off his bandages." But as she spoke the dread and fear that had assailed her before swelled up in her heart again, making her voice shake as she continued, "Would you like to see me do it?"

The faithful old soul hesitated a moment; then, realizing what the next few minutes might bring forth, sank down upon the floor and buried her head

in her snowy apron. Miss Hope turned the door-knob and waited for her answer.

"No, darling, no," she said plaintively, rocking back and forth. "I reckon I couldn't bear hit if I saw dat de Lawd had turned his back on all my prayers. Bein' kep' in suspenders all dese las' blind-folded days is jes' about wore out my nervousness and anxiety, an' I reckon I'll jes' wait here till——" but Miss Hope and Mr. Vaughn had entered the room and closed the door.

"Why, hello, Light-lady!" Victor cried eagerly, trying to sit up at the sound of her footsteps, but gently restrained by the white-capped nurse at his bedside. "And there's Daddy-boy, too! Hello!"

"Good morning, Shiny darling," Miss Hope answered, quickly crossing and putting her arms about him. "Do you know what day it is?"

"No. What?" he asked, kissing her and snuggling closer.

"Christmas day, and the day when——"

"Then I'd just like to know what's become of old Mr. Santa Claus!" he exclaimed, his mouth going down at the corners with disappointment. "Just 'cause I'm sick he's played hookey and——"

"No, dear," she hastened to comfort him. "He told me to tell you this: that as today was the time when good Dr. Frantz said you could have your bandages taken off, he would wait until tomorrow. Then he'll bring you an extra lot of nice things to pay you for being so patient."

The mournful curve of Victor's mouth changed somewhat at this message and the Light-lady went on in a persuasive tone. "You mustn't mind waiting for Santa Claus when you're going to get rid of these uncomfortable old things today," and with icy fingers, steadily controlled however, she began to remove the wrappings about his head and eyes.

It seemed to Mr. Vaughn, as he stood watching her for the first few seconds, that it would simply be impossible for him to bear the agony of suspense—that her quietly moving hands, with those of the nurse, would drive him insane if they did not hurry; and growing more and more nervous as they unwound the yards of clinging gauze he finally turned away, little guessing the mental suffering that she, the Lighthouse Keeper, was enduring, as she anxiously and fearfully did what she most shrank from doing, for his and his little son's sake.

At last the lowest pad was reached and with a supreme effort of will she lifted it off, and Victor opened his eyes.

"Darling!" she cried brokenly as she gazed deep down into their clear, lighted depths. "Oh, darling, you *can* see me, can't you?"

"Yes, Light-lady," he answered weakly, awed and rather frightened at this miracle of light after his year of blindness. "And I can see Daddy-boy's back, too!"

Mr. Vaughn wheeled about and with the tears streaming unheeded down his cheeks knelt by the

side of his little son's bed and clasped him to his breast.

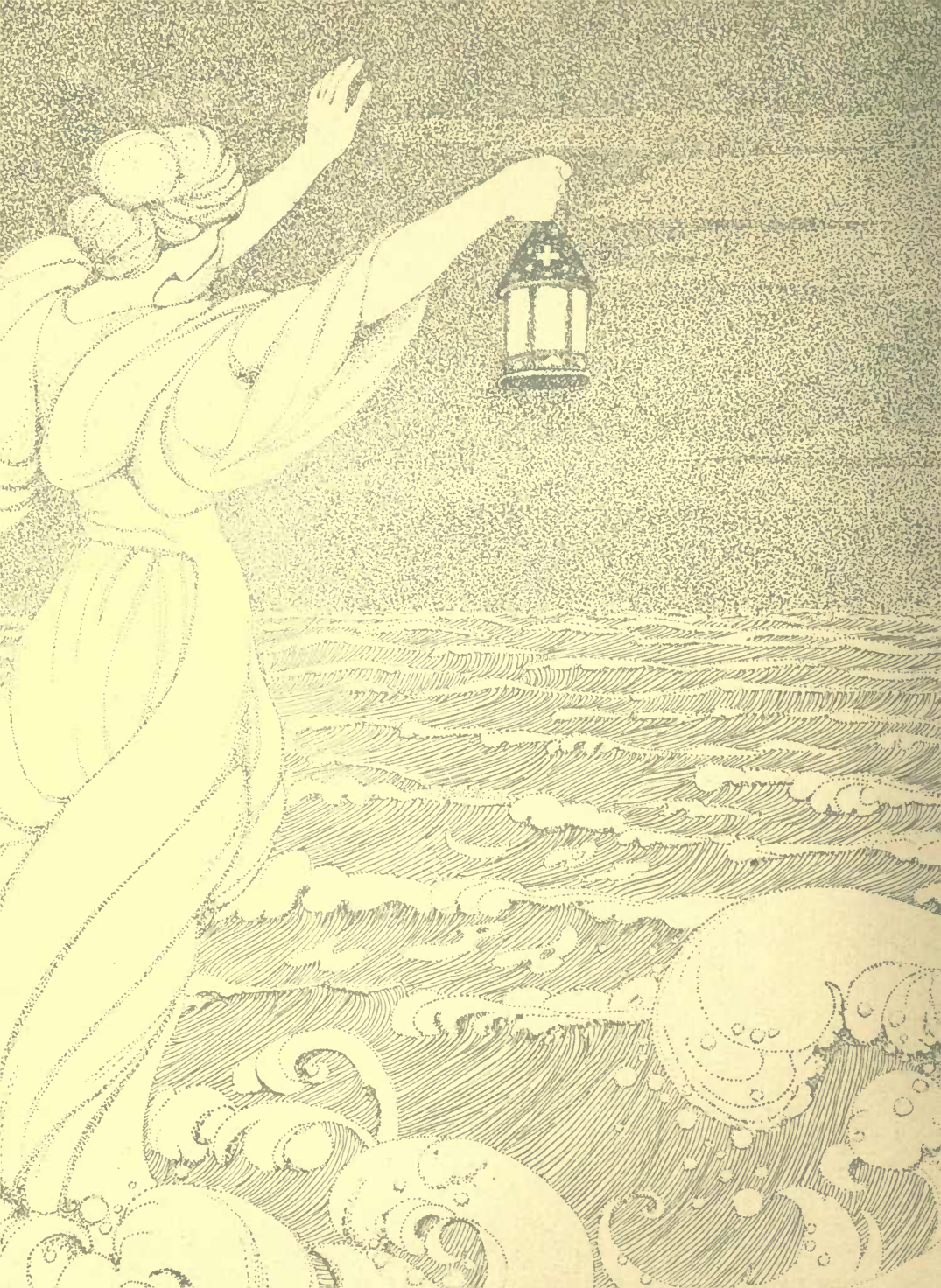
"God bless you, Light-lady," he said; "God bless you!"

"Amen, brudder! Amen! Now youse talkin'!!" Mammy yelled hysterically, flinging open the door and bursting into the room as the glad sounds of success reached her ears. "Glory Hallelujah! An' may the Earth resoun' with His Glory for sendin' this most blessedest Angel down to bless us!" and she threw herself at Miss Hope's feet, looking up into her lovely face with a look of adoration, then breaking out into a low chant of fervent happiness.

Suddenly from out the window, clear and sweet as the Christmas chimes, there came a sound of singing, and as it mounted to those gathered about the little Sunshine-boy it grew clearer and clearer in its perfect beauty, and the words seemed like a benediction.

"It's Mr. Night-man," Victor said when the Christmas song had ceased, leaving behind it the blossoms of sweet thoughts that it had raised in the listening hearts, "and he's all glad and happy inside like me now. Isn't he, Daddy-boy-chum?"

"Yes, Little-man," his father agreed. "We are all happy because, as Mammy says, the Lord sent us down his blessedest angel—The Lady of the Light-house!"



UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 110 621 0



